

Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Kathleen Herron and I teach mathematics to students at Capital Community College.

I am writing this email in support of HB 5300, *An Act Requiring Legislative Approval For the Merger or Closing of Institutions Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Prohibiting the Consolidation of the Regional-Technical Colleges*. This bill provides necessary legislative oversight of any merger within the CSCU System, a power that the Legislature used to hold. Oversight is needed. The merger of Connecticut's 12 community colleges would be a major change for community college students, and I believe that decision should not rest solely in the hands of an appointed Board of Trustees. Many faculty and staff, including myself, have been opposed to the merger of the community colleges, yet very little has been done to stop this train. The title of the merger plan is "Students First" but given the large sums of the current and future budget allocated to administrators, I think it should be called "Administrators First".

System officials first discussed the consolidation as a plan to save. When there was pushback, then and only then did they begin to say that it would also help students. However, any positive benefits from the consolidation, such as seamless transfer, can be done without merging the twelve colleges. This is nothing but a restructuring that adds many new administrators while cutting staff that works directly with students.

Help protect the Community Colleges. The students who attend are overwhelmingly from Connecticut and will stay in Connecticut to live and work. Community College students are majority black and brown, working class students. Real equity would be giving these students every opportunity to succeed by investing more in their education, not trying to save money by cutting the staff and resources that directly serve them.

Thank you.